HOUSEKEEPING PROBLEMS

312 It[1] was beautiful, soft, pure water which gave delightful baths,
271 but heavily silt-laden and supposed not to be fit to drink. We were luckily able to get half a dozen big petrol drums from Gilgit (left behind empty by the R.A.F.), and we stored it in these and let the silt settle. This water served us for washing and for photography.

312 About two miles away there was a spring of clear but hard water that issues from the foot of a cliff down near river level. This was recommended for drinking. So we took on a special man, Sagi by name, as water-carrier and general washer-up, to help in pantry and kitchen. He was a nephew of our old friend Nazar and a good fellow, though for some reason a little less cheery in appearance than our other men. Twice a day he would walk the two miles, climb down and up the 500 or more feet, and bring water for our tea, etc., and for making up the photographic solutions. We paid him the princely sum of about a pound a month, and he was delighted, while his brothers divided amongst them the extra work at home.

Considering the labour involved, it made us feel rather pigs to drink tea half a dozen times a day and expect a daily bath. When two of us were photographing hard and perpetually wanting to wash negatives and prints in eight or ten changes of water, my heart rather bled for Sagi. One day that had been particularly severe I said as he appeared with more and more water buckets at the door of the dark-room: "Poor man, I'm afraid our photographs give you a lot of extra work and trouble." His usually quiet face lit up with a peculiarly charming smile: "Nay, Mother dear, it is a pleasure, not a trouble. The work and trouble are yours."

262 The next thing in importance was food, and we found that
235 we could, without apparent hardship to the people, buy a daily hen. There are a couple of officials whose job it is to see
● [624] about supplies for travellers, and they arranged to get the fowls now from one village and now from another, so that our demands might not press too heavily on anyone. The Hunza hen is an athletic bird. You may see her fly like a lumbering, over-weighted pigeon 15 or 20 feet across a gully, and so we were not surprised to find her wing muscles well-developed.

[1] [The water in the Dâ[24]la, the aqueduct--Analyst]

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Buruaho AV7

Chapter 14

FIRST WALKS ABROAD

THE very day after our arrival we went out for a stroll to take stock of our immediate surroundings. Along the Dála, the little stream which ran in front of our house, there is a tiny foot-path, just wide enough for one. On our right was the channel in its carefully made bed with a stone revetting wall above it holding up the field above; on our left a fine hedge of quick-thorn to keep passing beasts from jumping into the field 4 or 5 feet below. We could hear a merry sound of drums and pipes coming from somewhere downhill, and asked what was on. It seemed that just before we arrived the first barley-cutting had been celebrated with various ceremonies, which we could only hope to see in detail next year, and some of the jollification was still being kept up. Qudrat Ullah was with us, and a "levy." I must explain the levies. In most villages Government chooses, no doubt on the Mir's advice, one or two of the most respected peasant-farmers who are not head-men or officials of the Mir himself, and pays them a small (very small) monthly wage so that they may be ready to do any little Government jobs that are wanted. There are three in Aliábád, which is relatively a large place with about two hundred scattered houses, and the Political Agent had kindly instructed them that one of their jobs was to be useful to us. I may as well at once introduce the two first: Kalbi is a fine upstanding man, rather darker in colour than the average; and Hurmat, a younger, very cheery fellow with dashing mous-taches. They are both intelligent and extremely friendly and eager to help. We didn't see why they should waste time on us for nothing, so David at once agreed with them that he

624 would pay them a small retaining fee if they would take it in
124 turns to be "on duty" with him in their spare time. They would obviously be useful informants.

487 We had to walk along in single file. There is no "road" in
312 Hunza where two people can walk abreast, or along which you can ride, except the "Great North Road" running through from Kashmir to Kashgar, and even it is never more than 4 to 6 feet wide. The other tracks run mostly beside small water-channels to enable people to get from one sluice to another to juggle the water now off, now on. Even when you have a neat little track fairly horizontal (there are only three of these possible for ordinary walking) it is broken every few yards by a sluice which you must jump or step over carefully so as not to interfere with the water arrangements or, alternatively, break your leg. The sluices are the simplest things imaginable—just a gap in the side wall of the channel which can be closed with a couple of convenient, slab-like stones and plastered up with mud from the watercourse. Occasionally there is a little wooden shutter which can be raised or lowered in wooden slots at the side.

As we went along David asked the names of the various kinds of water-channels, fields, etc., that we saw (the *names* he already knew, but not at first hand which kind was which), and presently we had a train of bright-eyed boys in the fields on each side, full of amusement at this new game. One would cry: "This stone is a flint; this is a stink-stone," whereupon he would crack it and give it to us to notice the faint smell of sulphur it gave out. Another would run up: "Here's a poppy and a poppy-head"—so we were not going to lack for willing teachers.

After a little we turned down a narrow "lane," less like an English lane than anything else on earth. It plunged downhill pretty steeply, sometimes just a rocky slope, sometimes just one boulder below another making a very crude flight of steps varying from 18 inches to 3 feet or so. Beside the "path" ran the inevitable water-gutter in which you could walk, as it happened at the moment to be dry.

417 On each side, a bare 3 feet apart, were the usual walls of
333

2a Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AVT Burusho AVT

spiritual head of the Ismailis. A few of the peasant farmers have learned to read—as some have learned to carpenter—and they have copied out such essential passages of their sacred Persian books as enable them to preside with due solemnity at a name-giving, a burial, or a betrothal. The Mir appoints a sufficient number of these modestly literate men to be khalifas, and lend a dignity to such ceremonies. When you need their services you send for one—as we send for the plumber when our pipes have burst. He performs his duty, shares with honour in the ensuing family feasting, accepts some small gift in kind according to the family's resources, and goes his way to resume his normal work in his own fields.

We knew Afiato of No. 6, for three months or more, as an obliging neighbour and father of a large batch of our child friends; we admired his skill in ploughing and threshing, and the hard work he had put into levelling an intractable patch of hill within a stone's throw of our house and converting it into a vegetable garden before we realized that he was a khalifa or lay-priest. There was nothing in dress or manner to distinguish him from his fellows; he offered no unsought advice and censored no one's morals but his own. If Hunza is, as I believe, the tidiest corner of God's earth, it is also the least priest-ridden, and the absence of fanaticism and superstition is as remarkable and refreshing as the absence of litter. There is an atmosphere of mental independence that makes the air of Hunza spiritually bracing.

What the pre-Islamic cults of Hunza were—and traces of them are slight though DL may have some conjectures to offer about them later—the Hunzukuts of to-day are extraordinarily enlightened.[1] Their folk-lore (very probably borrowed) may tell of apparitions and miracles, but they look for no marvels in their life of everyday, they see no ghosts and fear no Evil Eye. They indulge in no gymnastic prayers, they keep no Fast of Ramazan, they travel on no Hajj. I saw only one man turn Mecca-wards to pray, and that was our Kashmiri

[1] In astounding contrast to their magic- and witch-ridden Shin neighbours in Gilgit (*V. J.R.A.S.*, July, 1929, *The Supernatural in the Folklore of the Gilgit Region*).

R:Clark N-5 (1948-1951) 1963
AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

[P 40-C]

affairs, its defense, and its single telephone line. Hunza pays no taxes to the Pakistani Government. Instead, they are paid to the Mir, who is absolute ruler of the small border state. The Mir appoints an *arbop*, or village chief, and a *chaukidar*, or local sergeant at arms, for each village. Local disputes are tried by village chiefs. Anyone has the right of appeal to the Mir's court, which consists of the Mir, his hereditary grand vizier, plus the Mir-appointed chiefs of all the villages within walking distance of the palace. However, since the loser usually pays a fine to the Mir's treasury, and the winner traditionally gives the court a present equal to the loser's fine, not many cases are appealed. The Aga Khan (literally "Grandfather King") is spiritual leader of the Ismaili reli-